

The Real Causes of America's Wars, Lecture 4

World War II

The Fourteen Points

- Germany asked for an armistice based on Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points. This was a speech to Congress in January 1918.
- These called for restoration of Belgium, self-determination for the subject nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and an independent Poland.

Fourteen Points Continued

- The armistice agreement was based on the 14 Points, with the exception of Point 2, freedom of the seas.
- The 14 Points did *not* call for harsh measures against Germany.
- The German army had been pushed back, but hadn't been forced back to German soil.

The Treaty of Versailles

- The treaty of peace signed by Germany and the Allies was much more severe than the Germans expected based on the Armistice agreement.
- Article 231 of the treaty blamed Germany for the war.

Article 231

- *The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies*

Treaty Continued

- John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State under Eisenhower, was one of the authors of Article 231
- Germany lost part of East Prussia to Poland. The German port city of Danzig was under a League of Nations High Commissioner and subject to Polish control

Still More Versailles

- Germany lost all her colonies.
- Germany had to pay reparations for all the damage her aggression had caused. This included the cost of war pensions.
- The Treaty of Saint-Germain with Austria completely broke up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There was a large German minority in the new state of Czechoslovakia

US Foreign Policy in the 1920s

- I've stressed the Treaty of Versailles because the dominant theme of European diplomatic history of the 1930s is Germany's effort to revise the treaty.
- But why would this involve the US? During the 1920s, America largely retreated from the interventionist policies of WWI

1920s Continued

- The US refused to join the League of Nations or the World Court. The League was based on the idea of “collective security”. If a nation committed aggression, all the members of the League would take arms against it.
- This makes sure every international dispute becomes a world war.

Isolation?

- Charles Beard called this policy “perpetual war for perpetual peace.”
The US in the 1920s largely rejected it.
- One dangerous step in the 1920s was the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. This was a treaty to outlaw “aggressive war”. It allowed exceptions for self-defense.

Why Was Kellogg-Briand Dangerous?

- The pact was dangerous because it makes political disputes matters of law. People who are judged to be in violation of the pact can then be subject to collective security efforts.
- In the 1930s, this mentality led to the idea of “outlaw” nations.

Another Source of Trouble

- Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover largely followed an “isolationist” foreign policy.
- Hoover’s Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, was more warlike. He had been Secretary of War under Taft and would have that job again under FDR.
- When Japan took over Manchuria in 1931, Stimson wanted action against Japan. The Stimson Doctrine (January 1932) refused recognition to changes due to force. This could lead to conflict.

Influence of Revisionists

- The revisionist historians we talked about last week had a wide popular following. Harry Elmer Barnes was a leading public intellectual.
- Many people in America thought that American participation in WWI had been a mistake. We had been drawn into disputes that didn't really concern US

Neutrality Legislation

- When FDR became president in 1933, he at first continued the isolationist policies of his predecessors. He didn't call for a revival of Wilson's policies. Charles Beard wrote about this.
- America got into WWI in part because of passengers killed on merchant ships.

Neutrality Legislation

Continued

- The Nye Committee hearing in the Senate were influential on the dangers of arms trafficking
- The Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939 forbade shipments of arms to belligerents. American travelers on armed ships did so at their own risk or such traveling was banned. The 1937 and 1939 Acts included “cash and carry” provisions.

Hitler in Power

- One of the main points of the Nazi program was to end the parts of the treaty of Versailles that were bad for Germany.
- Hitler came to power in 1933. He left the League of Nations, reintroduced conscription, and in 1936, remilitarized the Rhineland.

Italy, Ethiopia, and Spain

- In October 1934 there was a fight between Ethiopian troops and Somalis under Italian leadership. The Wal-Wal Incident.
- Italy invaded Ethiopia near the end of 1935.
- The League of Nations imposed sanctions on Italy after the failure of the Hoare-Laval Pact

Spain and Fascism

- The sanctions drove Italy into closer relations with Germany, even though the League abandoned sanctions after the fall of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.
- A war broke out in Spain in 1936 when nationalist officers revolted against the leftist Spanish government. Germany and Italy supported the Nationalists, and Soviet Russia supported the Spanish Republic.

Roosevelt Quarantines the Aggressors

- Japan also became closer to Germany and Italy. The three nations signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936.
- Roosevelt around this time decided these nations were a threat to world peace and he wanted to take action against them.
- He signaled the new policy in a speech on October 5, 1937, usually called the “quarantining the aggressors speech.”

Quarantine Continued

- Roosevelt said:
- “The peace, the freedom, the security of ninety per cent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining ten per cent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law.

Quotation Continued

- Surely the ninety per cent who want to live in peace under law and in accordance with moral standards that have received almost universal acceptance through the centuries, can and must find some way to make their will prevail.”
- Soviet Russia was apparently included among the 90% peace-loving nations

Military Keynesianism

- Why did Roosevelt abandon neutrality?
- One motive was that the New Deal wasn't working very well. FDR needed a new source of spending to try to create an artificial boom.
- A war-scare with increased military spending would be a way to do this. The government would have an excuse to take over more of the economy.
- John T. Flynn stressed this analysis.

Hitler Overturns Versailles

- In March 1938 Hitler took over Austria. The Austrian Chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, had suddenly announced a plebiscite that would have upset plans for steady Nazi inroads into Austria.
- In May 1938, Czechoslovakia mobilized its army. This enraged Hitler.

More Overturning

- Hitler demanded that the Czechs give up the Sudetenland, a part of of Czechoslovakia with a large German population. He threatened to invade if this wasn't done.
- At the Munich Conference, September 29-30, 1938, Britain and France agreed to Hitler's demands.
- Roosevelt didn't oppose the Munich Agreement.

The Road to War

- Slovakia decided to seek independence from Czechoslovakia. Hitler decided to back them and took over what remained of the Czech state in March 1939
- British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain gave a speech saying that Hitler intended to conquer the world.
- The British also guaranteed Poland.

Why Did the British Abandon Appeasement?

- British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax played a more active role in British foreign policy after the Munich Conference. He favored a more aggressive policy toward Germany than Chamberlain did.
- Roosevelt encouraged the British to follow a more anti-German policy.

World War II Begins

- Hitler asked Poland to agree to the return of Danzig to Germany and a motor road across the Polish Corridor to East Prussia.
- Poland refused to negotiate from March to September 1939.
- Hitler invaded on September 1 and Britain and France declared war on Germany September 3. Hitler had hoped to come to terms with Poland and wanted good relations with Britain, but he wouldn't back down.

Roosevelt's Dilemma

- Roosevelt wanted to enter the war on the British side. But he had a problem.
- The great majority of people in the US wanted to stay out of the war. People hoped that the Nazis would lose, but they didn't want to get involved.
- Roosevelt said in the 1940 election, "I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again; your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."

Lend-Lease

- Arms and supplies had been sent to Britain and, France on a “cash and carry” basis. The Lend-lease Act (March 1941) allowed material to be loaned.
- Germany invaded Russia June 22, 1941. Russia was then included in Lend-Lease aid. The Communist Party and their many sympathizers had previously opposed the war. They now favored immediate American entry.

Back Door to War

- Roosevelt still faced a public that for the most part didn't want to get into the war.
- Charles Tansill and other revisionist historians have suggested that Roosevelt tried to solve his problem by provoking the Japanese to attack. Because of the Axis Pact, this would enable Roosevelt to bring America into the war in Europe, his main concern.

Back Door Continued

- How did Roosevelt provoke the Japanese?
He almost completely shut off oil exports to them in July 1941. This would be fatal to the Japanese economy because the US supplied about 90% of Japan's oil.
- An objection is that Roosevelt could have embargoed the oil because he wanted to stop Japanese aggression against China. We don't need to bring in the "back door" explanation.

More Back Door

- In response, the oil embargo was issued with no warning and Japan wasn't told that stopping aggression would result in ending the embargo.
- The US on November 26 issued an ultimatum demanding that the Japanese withdraw from China and French Indochina. Roosevelt and Cordell Hull rejected any more conciliatory measures.
- Hull said November 27 to Stimson, "It is now in the hands of you and Knox---the army and

Stimson's Diary

- Stimson's diary for November 25 indicates that the US hoped to provoke a Japanese attack.
- Stimson said: "The question was how we should maneuver them [the Japanese] into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."

Pearl Harbor

- Tansill, Barnes, John T. Flynn, Charles Beard, etc. think that Roosevelt deliberately withheld information from the army and navy in Hawaii.
- Admiral Richardson had protested locating the fleet at Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt removed him as C-in C Pacific Fleet in February 1941.
- I won't go into the details of the controversy, but it appears that the US knew that a